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THE EARLIEST SAMOAN PRINTS.

BY WILLIAM CHURCHILL.

The ethnica of the Wilkes Exploring Expedition (1837-1841) underwent a series of disasters of such gravity that it is surprising that anything was preserved. The official collections, known to have been of great magnitude and unrivalled importance, were lost in the wreck of one of the vessels of the squadron on the Columbia bar in Oregon. A surrogate collection was hastily assembled by Wilkes by annexing the specimens which had come into the possession of officers and men. This second and inferior collection reached Washington in 1842, vanished from sight for fifty years and was not discovered until 1892,¹ when I had the melancholy pleasure of installing in the National Museum all that had survived the decay of half a century. All the perishable materials had by that time gone into the end-products of decomposition.

When the squadron put into Botany Bay, after completing the survey of the islands from Tahiti to Fiji, the members of the civilian scientific staff were landed as a matter of convenience, while the naval officers went upon their dash toward the South Pole and the discovery of Antarctica, only recently confirmed. In the civil staff was Titian R. Peale, a young member of an old and respectable family of Philadelphia. It is through him that The Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia is in possession of one of the best collections of Polynesian ethnica anywhere in the world. Others are larger, but none is so seriously representative of the period before foreign contamination had been introduced. The records show little of the manner in which Peale's collection escaped the commandeering by Wilkes after the disaster at the Columbia; but it is evident that Peale landed his treasures when he went ashore at Botany Bay and that thence he secured transport by way of London to the United States. In due course of time he deposited these important objects with The Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, in his home town, where now they are displayed in a satisfactory manner and are available through the courtesy of the Academy for purposes of study.

¹ It had been placed in the cellar of the Smithsonian Institution and buried under many tons of incombustible coal.

Specimen No. 10,615 in the Peale Collection is a pile of small basketry from Samoa, half a dozen pieces of the common envelope type still in Samoan use. It is labelled "School Satchel." In connection with the date, 1839, this label led me to comment that at that time it would be somewhat proleptic to use the designation School Satchels, in view of the fact that the mission had then scarcely secured a foothold in Samoa. In continuation I informed the Curator that basketry of that size and form was intended to hold leaf tobacco and dry banana leaves for cigarettes, for I have been assured by James Dwight Dana that tobacco was found indigenous in the South Sea. Handling the satchel which lay on top of the heap, I noticed that it weighed more than I should expect, and that led to my discovery of printed matter contained therein.

So far as my information extends, these pieces of printed matter are absolutely unique. I have assured myself that they do not exist in mission collections in Samoa, nor yet at the home of the London Missionary Society; they are not in the British Museum, nor can I find them of record in any library custody. It is an inference, but there is much to commend it, that these pieces constitute a complete collection of Samoan prints up to the time of the visit of the Wilkes expedition in 1839. It would appear that Peale displayed an interest in the work of the mission, and a natural response on the part of those who were laboring in that field would be to supply as complete a collection as possible to show what they had already accomplished.

The following memoranda will serve to identify the several pieces in necessary bibliographic detail:

(1) E Mou | Imene | o lea foi le | Talafaalelei | i le | ATUA | ua imene i latou imene. Mataio. | Huahine | Neia i te nenei raa a te | mau misionari | 1836.

This is a single sheet, 278 x 437 mm., folded into 24 pages, containing 26 hymns.

(2) O | le upu aoai i na, ma le upu | a | Paulo ra; | ua na liu i le upu | Samoa | Ia aoao le mou tagata le upu moni a le Atua, | a ola latou. Huahine. | PRINTED at the *Mission Press*. | 1837.

This consists of one signature of 12 pages and one of 8 pages, 112 x 184 mm.

(3) O | le upu a le mou tagata anamua, | ma | Atamo, ma | Aperamo | e ma | tagata tele uma | ua na liu i le upu | Samoa | E aoga lo le lelei le loto, e iloa latou e le Atua. | *Iesu*. | Huahine: | Printed at the Mission Press | 1837.

Four signatures of 12 pages, one signature of 8 pages, 112 x 184 mm.

(4) O | le Upu | ia | Iosefa | na faamatalaina | o le upu Samoa. | Faapefea le taulealea i le faamama i lona savaliga? ia | toaga lelei iai, ia tataui i lau upu. Davida. | Rarotoga | Printed at the Mission Press 1837.

This is unbound and consists of two signatures of 12 pages each and one of 8 pages. It measures 117 x 190 mm.

(5) O Iesu Mesia Aruna Moni.

Leaflet of four pages, 110 x 171 mm.; footline on page 4: Rarotoga. Printed at the Mission Press. October, 1837.

(6) Isi Nei | SALAMO | a Tavita | (on footline) Upolu:—Printed at the London Missionary Society's Press M.DCCC.XXXIX.

A single sheet broadside, 278 x 437 mm., containing Psalms 117, 122, 128, 130, 121, 131, 133, in two columns.

(7) O | le Uluai Tusi | ma | Tama iti | (ornament of children supporting X Commandments) "Ina aoao ia i a outou fanau." O Mose. | Upolu:— | Printed at the London Missionary Society's Press. | M.DCCC.XXXIX.

Pamphlet of 16 pages, 118 x 171 mm., bound in paper cover.

(8) O le Tala | i | Lotu ese ese | (ornament of X Commandments) "E tasi lava le Alii, e tasi le faalogo, e tasi | le papataizoga." O Paulo i Efesia. | Upolu:— | Printed at the London Missionary Society's Press. | 1839.

Stitched, 12 pages, 105 x 178 mm.

(9) A | Matua Vosa | Vakaviji.

Four pages of alphabet, numerals, and spelling exercises.

And

A | Kosipeli | i | Maciu

This is a mutilated copy: signature 1 has lost pages 5–8, leaving torn edges. The signature was made up in duodecimo and on page 12 is the footline, Printed at the Wesleyan Mission Press, Vavau, Feb. 1838 (W. A. | Brooks. The second signature continues Chapter VII of Saint Matthew's Gospel at verse 7 and runs through pages independently numbered 1–6, the remainder torn out.

Both the foregoing titles are bound in a stiff paper cover, blue on pages 1 and 4, the white inner pages 2 and 3 show parts of a catechism or book of Bible questions in Fijian containing pages 10, 15 and 18 complete, together with the upper six lines of pages 11, 14 and 19.

These prints are interesting as showing the movement of the press in the South Seas. We note the items.

Huahine imprint. The first press in the South Seas was brought to Tahiti by the London Missionary Society about 1818 on the restoration of their work following the failure of the first settlement of the party which was sent out to Tahiti, Tonga and the Marquesas on the *Duff* in 1799. The first three items in this list do not, therefore, represent the first product of the press in Tahiti, for a considerable mass of literature had by 1837 been accumulated in Tahitian. But they do show that when the need first arose for religious prints in the evangelization of Samoa, it was necessary to employ the Tahiti press at Huahine as being the only one accessible. John Williams began his mission in Samoa in 1835 by a brief visit and returned in 1837; it is clear that the first three items were the product of his learning somewhat of the Samoan language in his first visit and that on his return to Tahiti he made this provision for his permanent settlement.

Rarotoga imprint. A second and better press was received in Tahiti in 1837 and the old machine then became available for the new mission in Rarotonga which had been established by John Williams on his way to Samoa in 1835. To this we owe items 4 and 5.

Upolu imprint. A new press was sent out from London in 1839 for the Samoan mission, and the Rev. John B. Stair was detailed to that field because of his knowledge of practical printing. It is not unreasonable to infer that the broadside of Psalms (item 6) is the first sheet run off the Samoan press, and that item 7 was the next, for we note that these two items use Roman numerals with points for the date and that it is not until we reach item 8 that we find Arabic numerals. That the Samoan printery was fairly well equipped we observe from the fact that items 7 and 8 are the only ones stitched or covered in the Polynesian series.

Vavau imprint. Less is known of the introduction of the press into Tonga. Item 9 shows that it was used for the printing of religious material for the mission in Fiji, which was subordinate to the Wesleyan establishment in Tonga. That this alphabetary and fragment of the Gospel of Saint Matthew was not the first Fijian product of that press is evidenced by the fact that the binding shows the use of wasted sheets of a former print.²

² Included in the same parcel is an undated specimen from another linguistic province. This is a small square octavo of six signatures without page numbers, stitched with fiber, bound with familiar Chinese red paper. The title occupies the upper third of page 1, as follows: Pinag Daanang Buhay nang | Princesa Adriana sa Caharian | nang Antioquia at nang | Principe Pantinople | sa Francia. This translation of a Spanish Novelette into one of the Philippine languages was undoubtedly acquired by Peale when the expedition visited the Sulu Islands.